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### Mental health services now delivered in aged care

People living in residential aged care facilities on the Sunshine Coast now have ongoing access to mental health and wellbeing support, thanks to a local targeted initiative.

Commonwealth commissioning agency Central Queensland, Wide Bay, Sunshine Coast PHN is funding Lifespan Health to provide mental health services in several facilities across the coast, from Caloundra to Gympie.

The PHN's CEO, Pattie Hudson, said the program was an important initiative to help improve the quality of life for those living in aged care.

"A trial of the program started in 2019 and the PHN is absolutely thrilled to be supporting its expansion going forward," Ms Hudson said.

"The program promotes better health outcomes for residents who are living with mild to moderate mental illness, which might be impacting their day-to-day lives.

"Services are intended to give residents of aged care facilities access to similar mental health services to those available in the wider community."

Lifespan Health's Director Dr Di Corser, a clinical psychologist, said it was a great privilege to be able to offer a service like this in an area of such high need.

"My experience working within aged care is that psychologists can enhance people's quality of life at a time when they are at their most vulnerable," Dr Corser said.

"Older people are challenged in many ways when living in an aged care centre in Australia and incidents of depression, grief, loss, and anxiety are incredibly high.

"Our psychologists work closely with family, carers, and staff to assist people in improving emotional well-being and live their best life."

Life Span Health's psychological services will be delivered in select residential aged care facilities across the region. Referrals are made by a visiting general practitioner, or by staff within the facility.

One local residential aged care facility manager said mental health care in aged care had been overlooked until the delivery of this program.

"It was very sad and lots of people suffered as a result," she said.

"Now we have a psychologist coming to see our residents on a weekly basis and the changes I've seen in some people is nothing short of amazing.

"One of my residents who suffered from extreme anxiety now has not only managed to overcome her fears and speak out, she has dealt with a past trauma that has been haunting her for most of her life.

"This will allow her to enjoy the final stages of her life in a more fulfilling and relaxed manner."

Those living, or with a loved one living in an RACF, can find out more about the mental health services available to them by contacting their GP.

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